

*Business of Supply*

what times of day and on what television stations? A great variety of schemes have been advanced. One is that television cameras should be installed in the house and roll continuously throughout all sittings of the House of Commons. This, it is argued, would provide a sort of videotape *Hansard* that television editors and reporters could resort to for the particular bits and pieces they might find of interest to their own small areas. Another suggestion is that only one restricted period of each sitting, such as the question period, should be televised. Yet another idea is that only grand occasions such as budgets, etc., should be televised.

There are simply a few suggestions. Yet another suggestion is to have a continuous telecast of house business carried on a special channel that would be free of other programs. All these ideas, I believe, have merit; the advantages of each can be persuasively argued, but all of them carry within them great problems.

For instance, just as soon as we introduce any element of selection to any method of telecasting parliamentary procedures we will raise the very difficult question of who will be authorized to make that selection. The main problem in this regard will concern the chief officer of the house, Mr. Speaker, and those who operate the television networks and stations. Beyond that is the question of selection as between the government and opposition, as between the various political parties represented in the house and, last but not least, the problem of selecting performers from the same party. All these questions will involve problems. For instance, if the question period only were to be televised, party leaders and members of the so-called shadow cabinet would quite naturally appear on television a disproportionate number of times. If we were to seek to overcome this difficulty we would run the risk of making such appearances appear contrived and unnatural. If a continuous videotape record were kept of proceedings, television editors and reporters undoubtedly would secure clippings of the performance of the member representing their locality to be used in local television stations. But, I ask what about the many hon. members in whose riding there is no television facility or only one station that is enmeshed in network programming commitments? Consider the number of homes without T.V. sets. It may be that under the present system a third or less of hon. members in this house will obtain extensive television coverage in their own ridings; all other hon.

members will not appear on television in their home ridings.

It is argued that parliament has fallen into disrepute with the public in recent years and that people tend to ignore and belittle this time honoured institution. Those who advance this argument say that whether you like it or not television is the modern method of communication and parliament must adapt to it if it is to survive as a meaningful institution. I must admit that I agree with a great deal of this argument. My reservations are based more on the apparent impossibility in the present state of things of making television coverage of the house do what we expect it to do. I have no wish to labour either my agreement with the principle of television or my reservations with regard to the actual practice of televising house proceedings. I simply wish to close my remarks by advising the house how important it is to consult responsible television people about every phase of televising our proceedings. In my limited discussions with responsible television people I have discovered that their objectives in securing television coverage of parliament are not necessarily the same as those of hon. members of the House of Commons. In fact, in some cases those objectives are diametrically opposed to ours. Yet, these television people would be the most important single element in any beneficial scheme of television coverage. I think the most important thing to be borne in mind is that under most of the schemes suggested for televising house business those in the television medium will retain the right of selection and editing. This presents a problem for those of us who see in the televising of house affairs a means of bringing the true picture to the public free of distortions resulting from selection and editing.

I wish to say a word about the cost factor involved, because we will be putting the burden on the taxpayer and he must be kept in mind. It is a major factor. It appears obvious that the televising of the house can not and will not be undertaken on a strictly commercial basis. This means there would be subsidized coverage, and subsidized coverage means expenditures of great amounts of tax dollars. We shall have to consider the question of whether the benefits of television coverage are worth the money required to sustain that coverage.

The only figures I have on the cost factor were submitted to the British house. A study of this matter was undertaken in Great Britain and the British Broadcasting Corporation